

*On Sunday Congressman David Price addressed a gathering at Meredith College's Jones Auditorium for the annual North Carolina Holocaust Observance. He invoked scripture from Proverbs to express how we must honor the righteous deeds of our predecessors by "mak[ing] a better future for those who will yet inherit the earth." Below are his remarks as delivered:*

"The memory of the righteous is a blessing," wrote the author of Proverbs (10:7).

We are met here today to renew and refresh memory, to keep alive the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. Thank God we have this capacity to remember. These memories still shock, horrify, and anger us. Yet the author of Proverbs insists that while "the name of the wicked will rot...the memory of the righteous is a blessing."

It is a blessing that enables us to keep faith with those who suffered and died – to empathize with what they endured; to mourn for their lost potential, their lost hopes; to pledge that their lives and deaths were not for naught, that they are remembered by us, their heirs, and that their lives will bear fruit in our own.

The memory of the righteous is a blessing that makes us vigilant, that warns us of man's inhuman capacities, that leads us to confess our own sin and alerts us to perils of complicity with evil.

This memory is a blessing that sensitizes us to human suffering whenever it occurs and leads us to become instruments of God's peace.

In this service and those like it across our country, the part of the world that is most likely to be mentioned is Darfur, in western Sudan. The murderous Janjaweed militias continue to kill and destroy there, and the conflict has spread to other groups and neighboring Chad. We must do more to get adequate numbers of African Union and UN Peacekeepers there and to step up international pressures on the Sudan government to end its complicity in the decimation of its own people.

There are other desperate needs that cry out to us today, such as the suffering of millions from loathsome diseases like Guinea worm and river blindness and continuing scourges like tuberculosis and malaria. It is remarkable how much misery can be alleviated or ended with relatively simple measures and modest expenditures. People of good will and sensitive memory must continually press the question: why are we, individually and collectively, not doing more?

So memory is a blessing if it leads us not only to empathize but to engage. Not only to vow "never again" but to find ways to give that vow focus and force in confronting the human tragedies that are engulfing large parts of our world.

Our most fitting tribute to the dead is to serve the living, to make a better future for those who will yet inherit the earth. An irony of our existence is that it is those who forget the past who are doomed to repeat it, but with remembrance come the wisdom, determination, and faith to bring in a new day. In this way above all, "The memory of the righteous is a blessing."